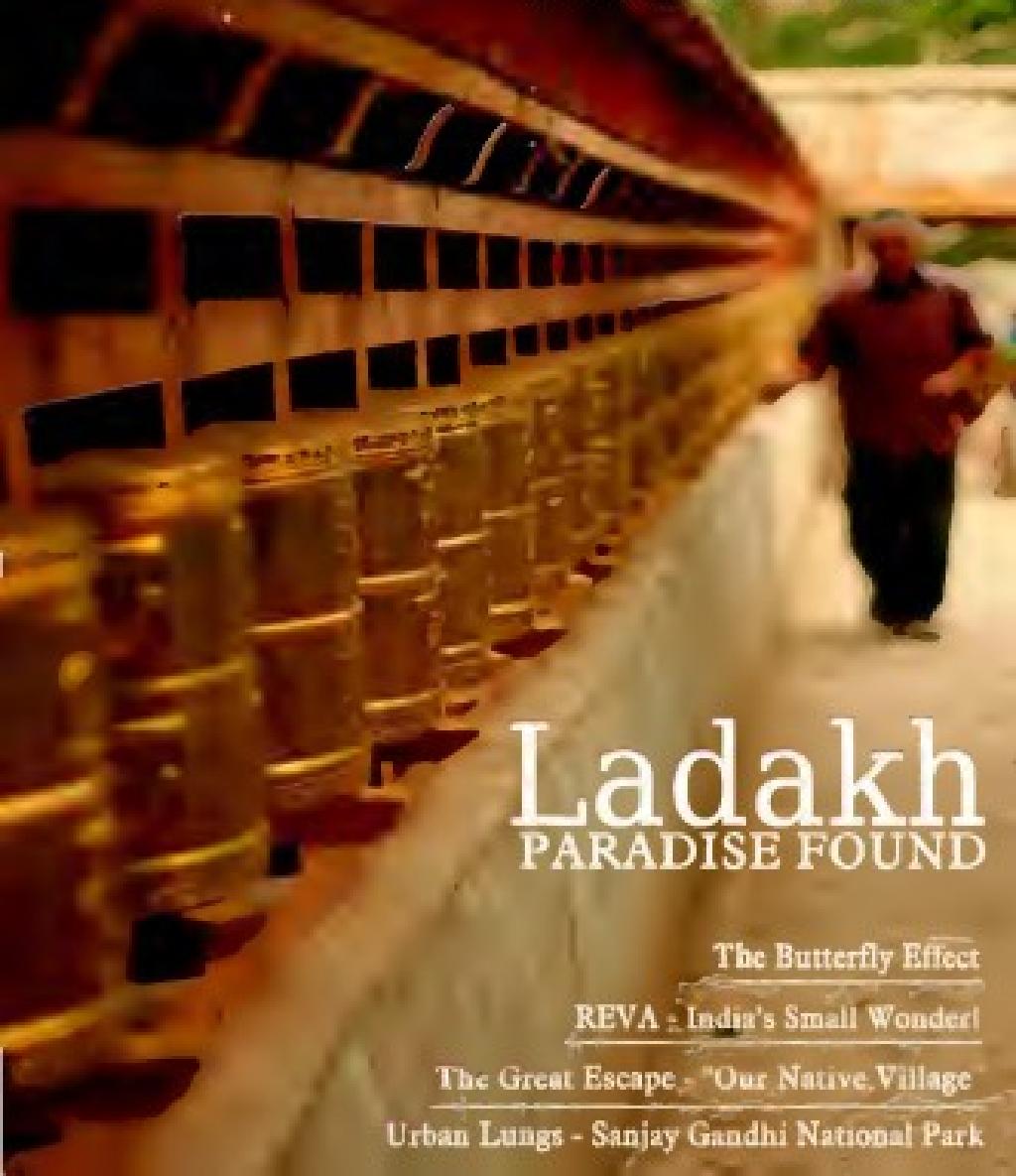




EK TITLI

www.EKTITLI.org/magazine

SEPTEMBER 2010 • VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 1



Ladakh PARADISE FOUND

The Butterfly Effect

REVA - India's Small Wonder!

The Great Escape - "Our Native Village"

Urban Lungs - Sanjay Gandhi National Park

BREATHE.... CONNECT....LIVE....

That's what Ek Titli is about. Everyday we come across mailboxes, newspapers and websites flooded with a plethora of information with dire predictions about our environment. Amidst all the hype about Global Warming, Greenhouse gases, Pollution, Impending apocalypse, there is an important, yet disconnected element... YOU. You last touch because at some point all this information got to you. And yet in all of us, there is a part that still wants to reconnect; a part that wants us to see the environment in a way we can associate with her again, a part that wants us to see that there may be problems but that the solutions are quite easily attainable. Ek Titli is just that. We want you to re-establish that connect and to this we present the concept of "EASY GREEN".

I'll begin with who we are. We are a bunch of enthusiasts who share diverse interests from cricket to writing to photography. We are distributed all over this country from Delhi to Mumbai to Bangalore and Hyderabad to Ohio and Seattle to many more locations. Yet we share a common idea albeit a simple one: We want people to get in touch with the environment again the EASY way. And that's what this magazine is all about.

This month we feature unique insights and perspectives on life... We begin with an exclusive on the Reva, India's first zero-emission car.. We then delve into the art of sushi making and how we can make it sustainable.. We also catch up with Green Heroes, Dr. Priyadarshini and Anand Karia and Mr. Persis Billmora, the man who seeks to make compostable plastic a household item. And then we want you to recharge so we offer you a first hand look at the concept of Holistic Resorts with an exclusive on "Our Native Village" in Bangalore and also at Green habitats in your own city in our "Urban Lungs" column. And now for the cherry, our 3 exclusive photo-journals that our worth more than thousands of words.

Last but not the least I take this opportunity to write a line on our cover. We feature a slice of paradise with an exclusive photo-journal on Leh and Ladakh showcasing that which is most beautiful about these locations: The people and their strong affinity towards their environment. Today as our brothers and sisters suffer from what is the worst ecological crisis to have hit them in the last century, we at Ek Titli express our solidarity and sincerely pray that one day not far from today paradise and harmony will be found all over again.

AVISHVA DUGAR
Editor-in-Chief



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Dedicated to mowing you



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The Tree

A philosophical tale on new age Darwinism.

WRITTEN BY RAJIT PRASAD VALIAR

An evening descended over the city, the stars emerged from behind the clouds. They dots spread over the blanket of the dark sky. The lights of the city were reflected haphazardly in the puddles of the rain-soaked streets. Their gaudy brilliance was no match, however, for the brilliant moonlight that now glistened in the raindrops on the leaves of the large banyan tree that stood in the center of the city square. The tree stood as a shimmering chandelier, with each shimmering drop mirroring the millions of tiny stars above.

The banyan tree stood in the middle of the street for as long as anyone could remember. It stood tall, like a grand old man, once loved but now left to its own devices as the city grew up around it. Its wide trunk, painted red and white, seemed out of place somehow - an exotic animal, brought out of the forest and now caged within a protective fence. The penalty of course, was far less romantic. Its neighbors had gradually made way for the narrow streets that now encircled the entire city. The banyan tree had somehow managed to keep its place in the center of the city square, surrounded small sides by an encircling road. It served now as an inconvenient obstacle to the traffic that passed around it.

An darkness descended, the lights returned to the tree, their light cast still drawing out the horns of the cars around them. As time went by however, they became increasingly silent, until finally a lone solitary crow let out a single loud call, it rang out loud over the city, like an anguished cry for help, but was quickly drowned out by the sounds of the city. In the battle against the exotic mechanical animals, the winner had already been decided ages ago. Their silence barely drew anyone's attention now. They stood as forgotten relics in their solitary green forest.

As the streets grew emptier, the night-crickets began singing their sweet song only being interrupted by the occasional howl. But the night passed by quickly and the large tree was soon illuminated by the first rays of dawn and the dew-drops once again lit up every leaf. Soon the birds awoke and the tree was alive with the sounds of life. But this song was short-lived.

Four men walked towards the tree, axes in hand. As the birds flew out, they cried in pain and confusion, but that did not stop the men. Four men passing about their axes. Four men helping drag the tree so that the car could speed along. With each strike, the tree shook violently. With each dull thud, the tree desperately hung on, until finally it could hold on no more. With a violent shudder, it came crashing down; its final, desperate cry echoing through the streets. The last stand of the tree came to an end. The tree now lay silently amongst the debris and no hint of its majestic splendor remained.

In a few hours the debris was cleared. In due course, the hole that now stood where the tree had once been was quickly filled up with tiny stones and thick grey tar. The large mechanical roller loudly and repeatedly flattened the newly laid tar, like a child trying desperately to wipe out all evidence of its error. But each press only seemed to add further insult to injury. When the tar had finally dried, it stood out like a sore-throat amidst the old weather-worn street, but this made no difference to the cars as they sped by. An evening changed to night the birds did not come. The song of the night-crickets seemed subdued and muted. Their song was now replaced by the sounds of the car engines that blared through the night. ■

Rajit Prasad Valiar

The author is currently pursuing a PhD in Computer Science. He is an avid reader, traveler and a never full coffee mouse.

SAVE THE TREES SAVE THE PLANET

Trees are something we all take for granted and to recognize their value is often the last thing on our minds. Besides cleaning the air, they give us shade, and impart an amazing aesthetic appeal to the neighbourhood, making it appear more vibrant and distinctive. They provide shelter for birds and animals that are rapidly facing the danger of losing their natural habitats. Green belts between human habitation and forests act as a natural form of insulation. It is a proven fact that the areas with foliage are cooler in summers and warmer in winters - thus saving our expenses on cooling and heating!



the Butterfly effect

MEET THE KARVES

In conversation with Ashden Award winners Priyadarshini and Anand Karve

The author catches up with the environmental innovators and gets an insight on how they are spreading the green word through their Saral Cooking

WRITTEN BY RICHA TANEJA

Can the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas? This question posed by Edward Lorenz, the man behind the Chaos Theory, later came to be more popularly known as the Butterfly Effect. To put it simply, the future is determined by present conditions. A small flap of a butterfly's wing in one part of the world today could lead to a tornado in another time and space. Similarly, your little "flap" for the environment today may not cause an immediate effect, but its effect could have a resounding and reverberating effect for the future. The question is - Do you want to be that contributing butterfly? Do you want to be Ek Taile?

In the pursuit to find such bonding links, Richa Taneja met the two-time Ashden award winners for sustainable energy, Dr. Anand Karve and Dr. Priyadarshini Karve, a father-daughter duo, who are incessantly working towards newer methods to create an eco-friendly environment. Here are the excerpts of their journey, their contributions, their struggle and how you can be a fellow link.

Following her father and scientist Anand Karve's footsteps, Priyadarshini Karve was always inclined towards environmental issues. In 2003 she founded Sanuchit Enviro Tech Pvt. Ltd (SET) in Pune, which works towards rural entrepreneurship based on appropriate technology. Her research led her to devise a fuel using the sugarcane leaves which are left behind after cultivation.



For her invention - the charcoalizing technology and the Saral Cooking System, she received the Ashden Award 2003 for providing a solution in the field of sustainable energy.

Kirk Smith, a famous researcher from the Biofuels and Development Project's research, Hawaii, has pointed out that inhaling of even a day's smoke from a stove has serious implications on the health. Smoke from stoves is the primary cause of acute respiratory infections like asthma, chronic obstructive lung diseases, low birth weights, tuberculosis, chronic cough, eye infections leading to cataract, still births and premature births among

SMOKY STATISTICS

- 60% of the households in India still rely on wood and biomass as cooking fuels using primitive, smoky and inefficient chulhas (Census, 2001)

- Every year 300,000 women and children in India die prematurely due to long term exposure to smoke in the kitchen (WHO, 2002)

- Subsidy on LPG and kerosene is not sustainable in the long term (Planning Commission Committee 2005)

"The kitchen kills more than the sword"

- GERMAN PROVERB

"These stoves can easily meet the demand of a small family and the urban population can conveniently switch to this eco-friendly way of cooking, following which we are hopeful that it can reach to the rural population who need it the most," says Prayadarshini Karve pensively.

Like father, like daughter. "It gives me a huge psychological satisfaction to contribute towards the society and I am delighted that my daughter also took up this cause with me," expresses Dr. Anand Karve, whose humble steps towards this noble cause began in the year 1982 when he joined the Centre for Application of Science and Technology.

The centre was registered as Appropriate Rural Technology Institute (ARTI) in the year 1996 with its branch located in Satara District, Phaltan in Pune. Dr. Karve is the current President for the same.

With the mass influx of the rural population to cities, especially those engaged in the manufacture of paper, glass, handicrafts and professionals like goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, he realised that farming and agriculture are sources of income that would work in a rural setup. Thus was born the impetus to devise methods to generate energy in an eco-friendly way in these set-ups.

THE SARAI COOKING SYSTEM

This is an eco-friendly and cheaper way of cooking food that you can switch to. It is a portable stainless steel device operating on the combination of principles of steam cooking and retained heat cooking. This has been hailed as one of the cleanest ways of using charcoal for household cooking.

FUEL REQUIRED

Ordinary wood charcoal or charcoal left over in a wood burning stove, or char briquettes made from agricultural waste

AVAILABILITY OF SIZES

SIZE	CAPACITY	FUEL REQUIRED
Small	2-3 persons	100 g charcoal/char briquettes
Medium	5 persons	100 g charcoal/char briquettes
Large	10 persons	200 g charcoal/char briquettes
Jumbo	25-30 persons	300 g charcoal/char briquettes

ADVANTAGES OF THE SYSTEM

It's a clean charcoal burning device. As the raw material used is wood, there is complete combustion and no soot remains as opposed to kerosene stoves.

- Fast lighting
- Flame control
- Height suited for squatting and cooking
- Flexibility in fuels
- Low smoke and soot
- Fuel saving
- Low price

AVAILABILITY OF THESE PRODUCTS

Konkan, Pune, Satara, Bangalore, Dharwad, Coimbatore

GASIFIER STOVE

This is yet another innovative product for an efficient and eco-friendly cooking experience. It has a stainless steel outer body and uses wood chips, pellets, biomass briquettes, small twigs, wood chunks, etc. as fuel producing charcoal as a by-product.

CLEAN FACTS

PRODUCT	FUEL	EMISSIONS (for cooking 1kg of food)	
		CO	Particulate Matter
Sarai Cooking System	charcoal/char briquettes	Less than 20g	Less than 36mg
Gasifier Stove	wood chips/pellets/biomass briquettes/small twigs/wood	Less than 8.1g	Less than 68mg

ARTI COMPACT BIOGAS PLANT

ASHDEN AWARD FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY, 2006



COMPARISON	OUTPUT FUEL (BUTANE)	INPUT FREEDSTOCK	REACTION TIME
Conventional Biogas System	500 g	40 kg	40 days
Dr. Karve's (Compact biogas) System	500 g	2 kg	1 day

His invention, the compact biogas system uses waste products from households, like starchy or sugary feedstock - waste grain flour, split grain, overripe or misshapen fruit, non-edible seeds, fruits and rhizomes, green leaves, kitchen waste and leftover food. This invention got him international recognition and fetched him the Ashden Award in 2006.

"This compact bio-gas plant is a good way of optimising the waste and is easy to set up in homes too. This system is 800 times more efficient than the conventional biogas system and is ideal for triggering generator sets for housing complexes," remarks Dr. Karve. "Also, when load-shedding has become a common norm in rural areas, biomethanification is an excellent alternative."

In Norway and Sweden, biogas is being used to run local buses. On asking about the feasibility of adopting a similar approach in India, Dr. Karve replied, "Organic waste has to be compressed so that the carbon dioxide produced after decomposition of starch could be weeded out. But it's a fairly costly affair and also difficult to adopt in the Indian scenario."

ROAD BLOCKS

A major road block to their mission is one of financing their operations.

"To popularise the improved cooking stoves, Samuchai participates in agricultural exhibitions and free demo in various places but for big scale marketing,

money is a hindrance", says Priyadarshini Karve.

"Need government's support to popularise these eco-friendly techniques. Exemption on sales and less octroi duty can be the first step.

But to even ask a question in the parliament, members demand money! Where do we get that from and why should we even give it?" questions Anand Karve.

Another groundbreaking venture of theirs which involves regarding the bio-degradation of bamboo is plagued by the same problem. This method involves impregnating bamboo with a mixture of potassium dichromate, copper sulphate and boric acid to retard its bio-degradation.

Impregnated bamboo can be used for constructing scaffolding for vineyards, greenhouses, fences, and even water tanks. They express, "Bamboo shoots' shelf life is not more than 10 days.

In case of bulk Bamboo transportation from the forests, a no objection certificate is required, but if the officers do not come for 10 days, the whole crop perishes and usually, officers do not come to aid unless their pockets are filled with wads. Again the question of money crops in."

When asked if any Government Ministry was supporting this cause, they resort, "The files are being transferred from the rural development ministry to the environment ministry to health ministry to women's health and child departments, but no one's taking any plausible action." The ownership of this has not been taken up by any single department leading to their petition running around in circles.

SARAI COOKING SYSTEM

ASHDEN AWARD FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY, 2002

Medium size model of
"Sarai Cooking System"



INNOVATION AT ARTI

Array of products & solutions offered by ARTI



Improved Laxmi Stove



Biogas from Organic Manure



Biomass Stove



Biogas Gasifier Stove



Vriksh Biogas Stove



Sarai Cooking System

GALENT FEATURES

- 1) Low emissions
- 2) User friendliness
- 3) Fuel use efficiency



Chai Biogasifier from Agro-waste

A RAY OF HOPE FOR SOME ACTION

An Ashden collective with 16 Ashden award winners of India has been formed in order to pitch to the Government the adoption of innovative technology that uses renewable sources of energy. "Not many people are working towards sustainable energy in India, thus we are hopeful that as a collective when we pitch in these ideas, some amendment could take place," inform the Karves.

In G. W. Longenecker's words,

"Life's battles don't always go to the stronger or faster man, but soon or late the man who wins, is the man who thinks he can."

The untiring crusade of the Karves for the environment is surely a source of great inspiration. Their pragmatic approach to the problems of an energy deficit along with the sustainability of its solutions is sure to set about a change in the way we produce and consume energy in the years to come. ■

Nisha Taneja

The author, passing her Masters in Mass Communication, enjoys travelling, reading, writing, dancing and music and explores to make films on social and developmental issues.

India's small wonder!

REVA

An exclusive article on India's first and only Zero-emission car with a sneak peak into how it works and what's in store at their Bengaluru office.

WRITTEN BY AISHAD VISWANATHAN





Every urban Indian has one common nightmare: DRIVING. Once upon a time this used to be a pleasure, but then income grew, traffic grew and public transport refused to scale. Then there was pollution compounded with rising fuel costs, limited parking space and the persistent growling of badly maintained engines. From Delhi to Bengaluru, from Kolkata to Mumbai every urban Indian is today hesitant to get behind the wheel. And thus when you notice a small, two-seater with bright orange streaks on the body whizz through the streets it has no exhaust emissions and you wonder what's under the hood.

Your attention is drawn to the rear hatchback and you see the words REVA written. Welcome to the world of zero-emission cars.

THE IDEA

The idea of creating a new paradigm in sustainable mobility solutions using renewable energy inspired Chetan Maini to set up the Reva Electric Car Company in collaboration with California based Amerigon

Like his alma mater from Michigan, Chetan Maini started with big dreams of challenging the might of automobile giants. His 'Sun-Runner' team finished amongst the top three in the 'World Solar Challenge' in Australia. The REVA electric vehicle was launched in Bengaluru in 2001 and in London in 2004 (later under the G-Wiz brand). In September 2009 at the Frankfurt Auto Show the company unveiled two new cars, the 4 seat REVA NXR and the 2 seat REVA NG.

Another interesting aspect about the Reva is the name. It came as a suggestion from Frank Wasser the US ambassador to India who suggested that Mr Maini name it after his mother. Interestingly enough, REVA also means a 'new beginning' in Sanskrit. And the name stuck. You can also clearly see that the Sun inspires this car in the bright orange streaks on the Reva's body.

Today the Reva has come a great way from being just a vision. To date they have recorded more than 100 million kms of user experience and have established a presence in more than 25 countries.

Another major boost has been the entry of the Mahindra group who have acquired close to a 50% stake in the company based on mutual synergies and future potential that they saw in the electric car segment.

DISTINGUISHING ELEMENTS AND HOW THE REVA VARIES FROM HYBRIDS

REVA electric cars have zero tailpipe emission. The amount of CO₂ generated per km varies depending on a country's electricity generation method. When charged from a renewable energy source, for e.g. Hydroelectric source, then the emissions can be considered to be zero. This is applicable for all electric vehicles. Hybrid cars on the other hand use two fuel sources (conventional fuel and electricity) to run the car and are fitted with an internal combustion engine. REVA's cars don't have the conventional internal combustion engine. REVA currently produces cars that run only on electricity since they believe that conventional fuel cars are no longer sustainable as a mobility option.

As hybrids preserve the internal combustion engine and are therefore part of the problem, they are unlikely to be more than an interim technology. Fuel cells are the holy grail although to date are still costly and require a new fueling infrastructure that would be prohibitively expensive.

For the REVA team, battery powered electric cars are definitely the way forward, with solar and fuel cells being incorporated into the electric vehicles over time and as the technology improves to a point where they become commercially viable and effective.

THE BUZZ AND WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS

REVA is all set to launch two new models of REVA NXR and NXG in the next few years. Both the cars were showcased unveiled at the Frankfurt Motor Show last year (2009). The cars are very different from earlier models in terms of style, features, design and technology as well.

The new REVA models will have futuristic features of keyless entry, REVive emergency charge enabled remotely to address range anxiety in customers, climate control seats, solar roof charging etc indicating a paradigm shift in technology and design architecture from the current model.

The REVA NXR is a three door, four-seater hatchback suitable for urban driving. Top speed is 124 kph (76 mph) with a range of 160 km (100 miles) per charge. If using the 90 minute fast charge (normal charging is eight hours), the REVA NXR offers an effective range of just 6 km a day. A fast charge for 15 minutes will provide a 40 km (25 mile) range.

Styled by Dilip Chhabria, the REVA NXG is a two-door, two-seater car with a targa top. The REVA NXG has a range of 200km (125 miles) per charge and a top speed of 130 kph (80 miles per hour).

The new models make EV's stylish and trendy along with making them simple and fun to use.



To know more about The Reva you can call their helpline - 1800 103 9999

REVA AND THE COMMUNITY

Reva for its development team at Bengaluru is not just a product but a movement. The Reva group organizes many initiatives through which they help raise environmental awareness. These include evolutions through the city on occasions like World Environment Day.

They also engage with a lot of thought leaders in the green space (including TERI and green oriented companies) to make electric vehicles a viable alternative for mobility.

Owning a Reva is not just about having the car; it's about moving to a green lifestyle. A REVA owner's community exists that consists of green conscious people who go the extra mile to lead less polluting lives.

Being the pioneers in electric vehicle technology, Reva has built tremendous value in intellectual capital. They have over 40 international patents in the field of diagnostics and energy management systems for electric vehicles. To make electric cars easy to adapt, REVA has developed technologically advanced batteries that improve their performance, in collaboration with battery vendors. ■

A SNEAK PEEK INTO HOW THE REVA WORKS

The REVA is a battery operated electric vehicle that with major components as above:

1. Motor
2. Battery pack
3. On board charger
4. Controller
5. Energy management system (EMS)

The car stores power at the battery pack when charged using electricity. The battery pack uses a lead acid battery pack. The motor uses this power to run the car through a controller that regulates the flow of energy from the power pack to the motor in direct relation to pressure applied on the accelerator.

All the vital functions for running the car smoothly are controlled by the EMS, the brain of the REVA. The EMS is a computer based system that optimizes charging and energy output of batteries to maximize operating range and improve performance.

With soon charge the REVA delivers 80 km. Charging the REVA is as easy as a mobile phone, by plugging the cable provided to a 220V socket.

Meet Venkatesh

This author works with Nestle Inc and completed his studies from Pune university. He loves quizzing especially the quizzes. His other full time activity is reading, lots of it.

Werewolves in Wisconsin

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNETTE MACHYE



The vast expanse of snow-covered fields with only the occasional farm in sight, the forests of bare-branched trees and the ominous-grey skies provide an obviously eerie setting for all sorts of manifestations of evil. Add to that a full moon and suddenly all one can think of are Werewolves. More specifically, Werewolves in Wisconsin. Although this collective has no images of the actual beast in question, it does however, capture the essence of the rural Wisconsin landscape, where this questionably mythical creature is rumored to have been quite frequently sighted.



The origins of the belief in werewolves or lycanthropy (the ability of humans to change into wolves) has been the subject of debate and study for a long time now. Wolves have always been feared as predators and have even been known to feast on human flesh in Europe during wars and harsh winters. So much so, that the French developed a word for a wolf that has acquired the taste for human flesh, the "loup-garou" or the werewolf.



Wisconsin has been home to many weird sightings. One look at the landscape and it is not hard toathom why a geyser would indeed inhabit this region. One of the first Wisconsin sightings was in 1956 when a man, driving down the highway, claimed to have seen a hair covered figure, standing over 6 feet tall. He described the creature as having both eye like and dog like features, with oddly shaped hands and a thumb. The creature gave off a purr sound and even uttered a dozen syllable growling noise. Eventually, it ran off into the night but not without making quite an impression on the often overlooked.



The actual metamorphosis, from human to werewolf, has been subject to widespread speculation. One of the oldest beliefs was that simply prancing on a belt of willow trees would trigger the transformation. Others believed that drinking milkwater out of the paw prints of a wolf would suffice. In many European countries, people believed that sleeping outdoors on a particular summer night with a full moon shining directly on the face would turn a man into a werewolf. In modern horror fiction, being bitten by another werewolf is the most commonly portrayed method for transformation.



Wisconsin's most famous sighting is probably the "Bay Road Werewolf" sighting, where a farmer named Scott Doty claimed to have seen a werewolf on his farm leaving behind huge footprints. None of these sightings, however, have ever truly been corroborated, only leaving behind a haze of confusion, unanswered questions and an ever deepening fear of the unknown.

André Pustzyn is a software developer with a passion for photography. He is currently based in Seattle, USA. When not programming like a madster, he is out capturing the great American Northwest in digital.

Sustainable Sushi

Abhishek Biswas takes you through the world of Sushi, fish buying practices and gives you insight into simple things you can do to ensure your favorite breeds of fish are sustainable and affordable, in other words sustainable.

WRITTEN BY ABHISHEK BISWAS | PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SURAJNA DASU



Sushi, an artful Japanese dish is a combination of rice, marinated or slightly uncooked fish rolled or topped with vinegar fermented rice and a surprisingly spicy sauce called wasabi, which, tastes like a very strong cough drop. The term sushi, also, seems to refer to a broad class of Japanese seafood preparations with rice and tofu. Personally I feel that the taste of lightly cooked fish is an acquired one but there is no question about its nutritional value. It is an affordable source of protein, iron and omega 3 fatty acids and contains almost no saturated fat. Also, there is a large variety to choose from, I mean how much chicken can you eat before you are fed up with it? With fish you can try freshwater fish, sea fish, shellfish, crabs, squids, psychic octopus and the list goes on. With variety come the diverse recipes from our Indian states. Spicy fish fry from Kerala, tangy fish curry from Mangalore, Goan fish curry with coconut and my favorite Bengali hilsa fish cooked in a coconut leaf.

The annual fish consumption of the world was at 140 million tonnes in 2007, out of which, 90 were captured from the oceans and rivers and the rest from aquaculture industry. The aquaculture industry is growing at a rate of 6.5% annually but there has been almost no growth in the captured fish industry since 2001.

Does this suggest that we have reached equilibrium or does it suggest that we are overfishing and soon the numbers are going to dip? Numerous research studies support the later possibility citing an over capitalized industry with massive government subsidies, no cooperation among fishing nations and steep competition.

The Sustainable Sushi effort strives to educate consumers and retailers of the damaging aspect of uncontrolled capture and cross breeding efforts which destroy the balance of the aquatic habitat and population of local fish species. A set of four valuable thumb rules have been identified for the sushi customer by the proponents of this effort. Briefly they are - eat small fish, consume only seasonal fish, shellfish and fish with silver skin as these are healthier and easier to farm.

The first two rules are common knowledge among the fish eating population. Smaller fishes are tastier, healthier and breed quickly, hence, abundant. The second rule about seasonal consumption of fish is vital from the fishery sustenance point of view. Never eat a breed of fish during its breeding season. For example we do not eat carps, shrimp and prawns during monsoon season.

There are monsoons, fishery protection acts banning fishing in certain areas and certain kinds of fish during monsoon, but, as a bi-weekly fish customer I see a quite steady supply of fish all around the year.

As consumers we should make informed choices to discourage environmentally unsound practices. It is not too difficult to find out the season of the fish you like. If your family regularly consumes fish, you would already know it or ask someone who does. Otherwise watch the market, fish prices tend to rise during off seasons and supply will not be regular. Also, try to consume fish which are farmed extensively like carp, tilapia, shrimp, shellfishes, crabs or fish which are abundant like sardines, mackerels and sardines.

I have myself seen some of my once abundant favorites like Pomfret, Butter fish (pabda) and lady fish become costlier and rarer. If sustainable practices are not followed we will see more breeds done to death.



Author's Bio:

A lover of classic literature, soccer and food, the author is a 17yo. D student who loves a knock of picking out great recipes.

MAKE IT YOURSELF SUSHI



Shrimp based Sushi:

- 1) Cook Sushi rice and mix vinegar into the same. Moistens your hands. Take a palm-full and roll it into Neat oval shaped ball.

- 2) Gently boil the shrimp.
- 3) Flare the shrimp slightly. Slit it and add a dash of Wasabi paste in the middle of the belly. You can also add a little Soy if you want to.
- 4) Next press this against the mound of rice such that the wasabi is sandwiched between the rice and the shrimp.
- 5) From till the shrimp and rice form a cohesive lump. Now place shrimp side up.
- 6) Lightly press the shrimp side and turn till the tail side is facing you.
- 7) Serve with Wasabi on the side.

The California Roll:

- 1) Cook Sushi Rice and mix it with Vinegar
- 2) Peel an Avocado and mash it in bowl. Add crab meat, salt and mayonnaise and stir.
- 3) Cover a Bamboo mat with plastic and place a sheet of dried seaweed on it.
- 4) Spread sushi rice on the seaweed and press firmly. Sprinkle sesame seeds on the rice. Turn it over so the seaweed is on top.
- 5) Place the stuffing on the other side of the seaweed that faces you now. Roll the bamboo mat to form a roll.
- 6) Slice the roll into bite size pieces.



Our Native Village

The author takes the day-off and escapes the hustle and bustle of Bengaluru as he discovers the world of holistic resorts at Our Native Village

WRITTEN & PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHREYAS SUBRAMANIAM



The first thing you notice when you drive down to "Our Native Village" is how dramatically a landscape can change. You might begin stuck in a long backlog to get past Mekhri circle, but an hour later you find yourself off the tar, on a dirt road charting through an endless expanse of grassland. Positioned ahead against the horizon is a small passage through a vast expanse of trees. This might sound like a narrative from a Tolkein book, but it isn't. It is the surprisingly unique entrance to the eco-resort, "Our Native Village".

Located roughly 30 kms from Bengaluru city, Our Native Village offers you that ideal weekend getaway when you want to escape from all things urban. It is an award-winning concept and recipient of the Virgin tourism award.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Greeting you at the resort is a beaming Ms. Anubha Ramakrishnan who co-founded this unique venture with her brother Mr. C. B. Ramakrishna, her daughter Kapila and her son-in-law, Sudheer Naik.

Their motivation came from a hark back to their childhood, whenever people would ask them where they were going for a holiday, the obvious answer was "Our Native Village". And this theme resonates in every aspect of this eco-resort that focuses on holistic health. You suddenly seem to take time to marvel all the little things around, the lush green, the vast expanse of organic farmland and yes, when you are fortunate enough, even a circular rainbow.

THE LOOK, THE THEME AND THE EXPERIENCE



Our Native Village is a welcome respite from the relentless bustle of India's cities. It's a haven for relaxing and rejuvenating. The resort is anchored in tradition while at the same being ahead of its times in its embrace of sustainable practices - it captures the India that was and showcases the India that should be. Simplicity, authenticity and harmony best describe the feel of the place and its range of messages are marvelous. All of us fully enjoyed our stay here.

Dr AR Gangayam - Associate Dean & Director,
International Programs Faculty of Business, University of Victoria

Designed by Bangalore based architect Chitra Vishwanath, the cottage literally works on the principle that 'what a bani is what a loci'. Every brick in this structure is unique in that it is made from the local red soil and is sun-baked. The net effect is a brilliantly striking structure that is also naturally cool in the hot Bangalore summers. But the resort incorporates what can best be termed as New Age swaavaranam - it makes its own energy, harvests its own water and grows its own food. Subtly scattered around the premises are a windmill, dozens of solar panels and a bio-gas plant. The distinctly wave-shaped roofs do more than just adorn the structure - they aid rain-water harvesting. To optimize natural resources further, the resort uses a brilliant local concept of a three layered roofing comprising of a palm leaf thatch, zinc sheets and bamboo mat lining in that order.

ONV sits in the middle of acres of organically grown fertilizer. To travel from one place to another you can catch the bullock-cart "shuttle" they provide you with, or cycle it down. The resort also features locally inspired outdoor areas like a circular seating area adorned by vesakku or memory stones (Vesakku is a memory stones have been part of Indian history since the 4th century. They used to be utilized in the memory of brave heroes and dutiful women folk of the past and is a way our rich cultural heritage is recorded).

Step into one of the rooms and again the amazing local flavor continues to resonate. Every room has a unique mural, painted by local artists, that reflects a unique style of Indian art. Another thing that catches your eye: NO BEDS. Instead there are raised platforms with thick mattresses. Placed discreetly in a corner you find a select collection of books carefully chosen by the proprietor herself. This, along with the absence of an alarm box, is a subtle indication to tell you, that it is time to catch up with that most important person - you.

Other aspects of the room include terracotta water pitchers and glasses, a light wisp of sandalwood (a traditional Indian incense) to freshen the room, custom made soaps and salves in the bathroom and of course, the view.

Next up is the restaurant with its own share of surprises. The entire menu features zero oil cooking. The food also reflects the Ms. Ramakrishnan's focus on vegetarian and holistic nutrition. And contrary to what you'd expect, the food tastes real good too. On the day of my visit, the menu consisted of cold Carrot Soup, the traditional Indian fare of roti and different subzis, salads and yes even a biryani! You really cannot make out the absence of oil in the entire fare. The cuisine blends elements of cooking-styles from both North and South India to create a mouth-watering meal. And to top it off you get to enjoy Ms. Ramakrishnan's wonderful company as she spends time with each guest.

TREAT YOURSELF

What good is holistic healing if it comes without an element of pampering? ONV features "Soul Spa", a one of a kind spa that features conventional therapies based on Ayurveda combined with new age techniques like "Past Life Regression" and "Rebirthing Breathwork". The spa uses very authentic equipment like a table made from Neem-wood in accordance with Ayurvedic practices from Kerala. As you lie down, you find the more subtle influences from the state, like a fossilized palm leaf impression on the ceiling. You can enjoy a myriad of massages like the abhyangam (full body massage), shirodhara (unique head massage where oil is slowly trickled over your forehead from a brass cistern), shucham (to help you de-toxify) or the kuduvu (for all those stressed executives with a bad back).

The resort also features a Meditation Center and a herb garden. This garden has been grown based on recommendations of the FRLHT (Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Tradition). The garden comprises a collection of colorful herbs and remedial plants. You may even find the natural equivalent of a Band-Aid here!

Tired of all the pampering for your soul? Well, how about a swim in the bio pool. This is a zero-chemical pool and features a natural filtration system of reeds and rushes that purifies the water. This water is reused by the resort in its farmland.

FOR THE KIDS

If there's so much to do for the adult folk, why should the bachcha party stay put? ONV hosts an array of traditional games like gilli-danda, slingshots and many more. Kids can also get a taste of what life was in the yester-years by taking part in activities like making coconut pottery and painting. Says Mr. Abhilash (one of the staff members), "If you ask today's kids where milk comes from, they will say a packet. That is why we decided to feature these unique activities to help them learn what life in the village was like". There is also a host of indoor games like pakkawadi, chess, snakes-and-ladders and many more. ■

Sreyan Subrahmanyam:

The author is a computer engineer working in Bangalore. He is passionate about technology & electronic games. He also loves the occasional weekend getaway.



ONV's Copper Cookware



FACT LIST

ADDRESS

Survey no 72 | Kodikodi Village, Hessarghatta Road,
Bengaluru District, Bengaluru 560088, India

DISTANCE FROM MAJOR TRANSPORT CENTERS

Train station (Bengaluru-city): 45 km
Airport (BLR): 50 kms

IN-ROOM FACILITIES

: Hot and cold water

OTHER AMENITIES : Doctor on call, Conference hall, Credit card acceptance, Deposit locker, Swimming pool, Ayurvedic / Yoga centre

URBAN LUNGS

GREEN IN THE MIDST OF CONCRETE

*Catch a breath of fresh air this time unlike
Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai.*

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADITHI MURALIDHAR

With its time for a vacation, a some environment beckons one and all - be it the CEO of a big-shot company or a down-to-earth labourer. The former may achieve it in a five-star hotel situated on a hill-station and the latter may achieve it in his own village. The city life doesn't give much opportunity for people to actually be amidst some greenery. Being in a situation where you couldn't be out for an entire day, yet manage to escape into wilderness for a short period of time - One is left with but a few choices. If you are lucky enough to live in a city like Mumbai, you have but one choice: Sanjay Gandhi National Park - a little green haven in the heart of one of the most polluted cities in the world!

It is quite extraordinary how one can displace him/herself from the hectic and exhausting city life to the peaceful and serene environment of the park within an hour or two. It is like the only little oasis in this vast urban desert. Often called the 'Lungs of Mumbai', this green patch not only forms the catchment areas for Vihar and Tulsi lakes, which are among the important sources of water for Mumbai city (other than Medak Sagar, Tansa, Upper Vaitarna and Bhavali), but also helps in keeping down the pollution levels of Mumbai by supplying fresh oxygen and acting as a sink.

I happened to visit SCNP this July (well into the middle of monsoon). The monsoon had transformed the dry forest into a lush green scape with flowers blooming and adding more than just green to the scenery. We had not gone with the intention of serious birding or a wildlife trail. It was just meant to be a hike, a walk from the entrance (at Borivali) to Kshetra, to explore the caves, and head back! That's about it! And even though, we weren't 'looking' for wildlife sightings, we had the opportunity to see many wonderful inhabitants of the park. All the trees were wearing their best green outfit and the smaller bushes and plants adorned themselves with colourful flowers and fruits.

The ones that I could identify included Teak (*Tectonia grandis*), Karanji (*Pongamia pinnata*), Red silk cotton tree (*Bombax malabaricum*), Coral tree (*Erythrina variegata*), Copper pod (*Pithecellobium isermanii*), Acacia, False Ashoka, Palms, Cannon ball tree (*Couroupita guianensis*), Zingiberaceae Species, Bau, Kadamba (*Adansia cordifolia*) and many woody climbers. There are large patches of Bamboo, which make the feel of the forest even better. We didn't expect to see many birds, as during peak monsoon birds normally retreat to more sheltered places. But it so happened that, the weather for the day had a sunny morning in store for us and we managed to see a few birds.





It included Sunbirds, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Flowerpeckers, Kingfishers, Barbets, Parrots, Parakeets and Warblers. The invertebrate world is well established in this region from tiny ants to huge crabs. The Reptilian world is represented by Crocodiles in Tula lake, Monitor lizards (mostly spotted), Rock Pythons (*Python molurus molurus*), Cobras (*Naja naja*), Russell's viper (*Daboia russelii*), Rat snake (*Ptyas mucosa*), Green vine snake (*Ahaetulla nasuta*) and Checkered keelbacks (*Xenochrophis piscator*) found in and around the park. During the monsoons, one can hear the mating calls of frogs giving a tough competition to the bird calls!

But the highlight of the walk (this time) - The butterflies! Often neglected, these invertebrates rarely share the limelight with the higher forms of the vertebrate kingdom.

We got to see over 20 species of butterflies and they included- Common crow, Blue bottle, Common emigrant, Common green yellow, White Orange Tip, Yellow Orange Tip, Blue glassy tiger, Common lime, Dotted Eggyfly, Common Mime, Plain Tiger, Tailed Jay, Blue Oakleaf, Tiny grass skip, Common Pierrot, Tawny Rustic etc The kids had got many weird and colourful looking insects to come out of the various crevices and cracks to look for food - black and red ants, yellow spiders, jewel bugs, metallic blue insects, brilliant blue and crimson coloured dragon flies, peculiar looking beetles and bugs and marmas The sheer sight of these vibrant colours took my breath away Blue Oakleaf, Common Crow, Black



Wingfield Hospital and Health Centre

looking berries and bugs and insects. The sheer sight of these vibrant colours took my breath away! Blue Oakleaf, Common Crow, Black Stream Chifer, Lynn Spider, White orange tip.

One of the 'Tourist' spots of Marmarba is made SCNPI - the Karthen Caves. This forest has a history dating back to the 4th century BC. Sopara and Kalyan were two ports near Marmarba which used to trade with Greece and the Middle East. The trade route connecting these trade centers and the two ports passed through this particular forest. En route, you come across the rock cut caves of Karthen which housed ancient Buddhist settlements dating back to the 4th century.

They served as rest houses for wanderers and weary travellers. The caves can be reached easily and provide an interesting glimpse of Buddhist history and culture in India. Most of the Buddhist caves are chiseled out of the volcanic rock, and are simple small chambers, known as viharas. Some chambers are much larger and are known as chaityas, probably used for congregational worship. The main chamber has colossal figures of the standing Lord Buddha, on either side of the entrance; a colonnade of 34 pillars stand in the inner hallway and a large stupa (stūpa) at the far end - all carved in to the existing basaltic rock.

The blend of nature and human architecture is distinctly visible at Kothiem. If you are done exploring the caves below, you can head towards the higher areas which will treat you to more wonderful and panoramic views of hills, lakes and open expanses. At the same time, from another side, the not-so-distant city can be seen beyond the green, sky scrapers, tall buildings and mega structures and marky skins that spoil the otherwise natural green scope of the forest. This National park is unique for yet another reason - it contains a sizable population of Panthers/Leopards. The density of Leopards is one of the highest for any such wilderness, which makes an encounter with this wild animal a very real possibility. For the past ten years, there have been attacks stalking children and adults outside the park fringes, attributed to leopards.

This green patch amidst Mumbai city is under the tremendous pressure of the mounting metropolis surrounding it. A very high degree of encroachment from outside and within the park by human settlements is causing severe environmental degradation. The careless attitude of devotees/pilgrims during certain festivals poses a threat of fire hazards. It also leads to the further degradation of the forest. The human-animal conflict in the fringes of the park arises mainly due to poachers looking for easy prey like stray dogs near garbage dumps, human settlements etc. Adult leopards are solitary. Each of them lives and hunts by itself in a territory also known as the home range. The size of the home range varies, depending on the food and water supply. In areas where there is plenty of food, a leopard's territory can be as small as a few square kilometers.



In areas where food is hard to find, a home range is much larger. In general, a leopard's territory usually ranges from 10 - 50 sq km. Considering that Sanjay Gandhi National Park spans over only 100 sq km, of which just 50 sq km fall under the 'core' area of the park, this area is insufficient to sustain a population of even 20-25 of these big cats. No wonder the leopard often finds himself in the nearby territory of us human beings.

Though the park boasts of other large mammals like Spotted deer, Sambar, barking deer, Porcupine, Palm Civet, Four-horned Antelope, Hyena, Mouse deer, it is something short of a miracle if you spot any of these wild animals (maybe except a spotted deer) whilst your walk at the park. Many believe that the park cannot support these animals anymore due to the terrible extent of the habitat degradation that has already occurred here. These animals may have once lived in these forests, but probably not any more. The Hanuman Langur, Rhesus Macaque and Bonnet Macaque are the only mammals that you may sight in the park these days.

Almost the entire park is washed with the rainbow hues of the flowers that bloom here during the monsoon season, and it is a must to visit this place during this time of the year. All of us are not lucky enough to see all the facets of nature's symphony in the forest in one walk. Many may not be able to appreciate this little place unless they lose it. But I am hoping that doesn't happen. It is too valuable a place to be lost due to our carelessness.

I consider myself lucky as a Mumbaikar that I am blessed with such a green haven just next door. I will do all it takes in my power to keep the faith, create awareness and help this green forest fight the unconstructive consequences of urbanity. ■

URBAN LUNGS: GREEN IN THE MIDST OF CONCRETE

Unplanned urbanisation has become the bane of today's cities. With concrete jungles threatening to wipe out even the tiny bit of greenery present in cities, the onus is entirely on us to do what it takes to protect what's left. Starting this month is a 3 part series, which would aim to showcase green havens in the midst of three of our crowded cities — Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

In this issue, the spotlight is on the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai. The park abounds in a rich diversity of flora and fauna. Aditi Murarkar takes us through a vibrant verbal imagery of the bounties of nature that the park has to offer us.

Aditi Murarkar

The author is a post graduate in zoology who has travelled the length and breadth of India in her pursuit for nature and wildlife conservation and studies.



ANGKOR THOM

From Engineering Marvel to Ecological Disaster

We try to unravel the mystery of how the world's greatest pre-industrial settlement just disappeared into the wild.

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARSHAD YSWANATHAN

Think Cambodia and images of ruins in the jungle, mighty stone faced temples and brilliantly carved terraces flood your mind. You think of trees and stone structures struggling to occupy the same place and of its crown jewel, the massive Angkor Wat. But in all this grandeur of the ancient engineering, there lies a strange paradox: how did the Khmer civilization which rose to such heights suddenly vanish? The answer to Angkor's fall lies in Angkor's tree.



As you land in Siem Reap (the modern-day town nearest to Angkor Thom), you cannot but help notice vast tracts of richly watered ancient paddy fields. At first this sight seems like any ordinary rural East Asian landscape, but consider the fact that these fields have been around for over a thousand years and one gets a whiff of ancient engineering. Truth be told, Cambodia or specifically the Khmer empire was nothing short of an engineering miracle.

In fact Angkor was the largest pre-industrial civilization with over a million people residing in the city. The main urban area spanned over a 300 square feet and was surrounded by many suburbs. The city featured intricately carved temples, the grandest of which was the Angkor Wat. Scores of people migrated to this prosperous land. To feed this burgeoning population, Angkor's rulers devised an extensive water management system that allowed them to have up to 4 paddy crops a year (To see the magnitude of this achievement, compare it to the fact that in modern day Cambodia, they only harvest one crop a year). This system included a complex network of canals, tanks and reservoirs and ponds in which they harvested rainwater.

To see these engineering wonders one need not travel far from Angkor. To the west of Angkor lies the West Baray - a massive manmade lake spanning roughly 17 square km. Built in the 9th century, the Baray (i.e. reservoir in Khmer) served as a source of water for year-round agriculture. This feature of rain-harvested tanks is also seen in many of the temples including Angkor Wat. The Khmer also ingeniously changed the course of the Siem Reap river that flows down from the Kulen mountains in the north to feed their thirty paddy fields.

While this helped create the most technologically and militarily superior kingdom of its day, new research by GAP (The Greater Angkor Project) and Dennis Evans, an archaeologist from Sydney University shows that this quest for taming nature might have proved costly and caused an environmental disaster that ultimately led to Angkor's downfall. As Europe entered the Renaissance, this massive urban habitat roughly the size of Los Angeles got swallowed up by the jungle.



Angkor Wat: Dramatic view from across the moat



This could have been caused by the Khmer's over-engineering of their environment. Patterns seen in the land-use modification were so intensive that it could have led to a host of ecological problems including deforestation, overpopulation, top-soil degradation and erosion. This pattern according to Evans's research may not be isolated just to Angkor but may have been the cause for many other ancient urban spaces to have collapsed. What was once an engineering marvel and a representation of our supposed invincibility over nature, is today a mass of ruins devoured by the unforgiving nature that has healed itself in these years.

The story of Angkor Wat reinforces our belief in the adage, "There is enough on Earth for man's need, but never enough for man's greed".



Ruins at Bayon

Archaeo Viewpoints

The author works with Yahoo! Inc and completed his studies from Penn University. He loves reading, especially literature. His other full-time activity is reading, lots of it.



Ladakh

A few quintessential Ladakhi sights

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SULAGNA BASU

Many a traveller has been enthralled by Ladakh's surrealistic capture and beauty. Its serene lakes and uncanny blue skies against the stark, stony mountains of sand and stained rocks make for some of the most dramatic landscapes. But the heart of Ladakh lies with its people. They stand true to the elements around them, with the enduring strength of their mountainous, going through life with an perennial optimism in their rivers. These photographs are a tribute to the people of Ladakh, as they deal with the aftermath of the flash floods that took place on 9th Aug. 2010, once again faced with the harsh unforgiving face of their land and yet, never jaded by its beguiling beauty.



The short flight from Delta Lake, offers a breathtaking view of the Himalayan range. The endless sea of frosty mountain peaks serves almost as a promise to the traveler, of great sights to be seen, a great land to be discovered.



While the domestic yak is found in millions all across Central Asia in herds (no?/cousin), the wild yak has a far decreasing population, owing to uncontrolled hunting, and is listed as a Vulnerable species. The wild yaks, however, are extremely well adapted to the harsh highlands and are adept at climbing mountains. Herds travelling in snow, walk in single file with every yak carefully stepping on footprints left by the leading yak.



LAMAYURU GOMPA (GOMPA: LADAKHI FOR MONASTERY)

One of the oldest and largest Buddhist gompas, Lamayuru houses approximately 300 resident monks. Legend has it that the Lamayuru valley used to be a clear lake with many (very venomous) cobra snakes residing in the lake. The lake eventually dried up to make way for the construction of the monastery. Today, the Gompa is also known for the annual masked dance festival that it hosts.



PANGONG TSO (TSAI) LADAKHI FOF LAKE

At 4,350 mts, Pangong Tso one of the highest brackish water lakes, is one of Ladakh's most striking sights. Its characteristic blue waters are devoid of any fish and micro-vegetation. The greater part of the lake lies in China and Pangong Tso was even witness to military action during the Indo-Indian war in 1962 and continues to remain a sensitive border area. Nevertheless, Pangong's verdant waters, attract throngs of tourists every season, most of whom live in Springari village on the banks of the lake.



Confluence of Indus and Zanskar

Indus - Ladakh's lifeline flows in from the Tibetan plateau (originating near Lake Manasarovar) to meet the muddy waters of the Zanskar river. There are many environmental concerns regarding the Indus, including the threat of deforestation, global warming, and industrialization and an apparent shift in the course of the river, progressively moving westwards. The Indus flows through the entire Ladakh district and is often a companion on trips across the heartland of Ladakh, as it flows along winding mountain roads.

Sutanya Basu is a Software Engineer and is currently serving in Gurgaon. Her two life passions are travel and photography and she loves to pursue both full-time some day!



"Act before it's too late"

In conversation with Mr Persis Bilmora - the man who seeks to make plastics eco-friendly

WRITTEN BY RICHA TANDYA

He calls himself a philanthropist who was always inclined towards bringing about social reforms in the country - it is this vision that has led to the foundation of two very innovative environment friendly groups - The Society of Biochar Initiatives and Earth Soul India. Ek Taah catches up with the man behind these - Mr. Persis Bilmora.

"I realised that 99% of living organisms are already headed towards extinction and there is a constant battle for the survival of civilisations. Hence it is very important for nature and man to be in harmony," expresses Mr. Bilmora.

The growing human race is an ever increasing burden on the Earth's resources. The result of this is rising carbon emissions leading to global warming. The most recent example of the environmental mess we have landed ourselves in is the flash flood in Leh. These environmental aberrations and signs of impending ones have propelled him to take up the cause himself. Earth Soul India is outcome of these concerns, an organisation which deals in "Compostable" biopolymers that are made from renewable natural resources such as non-edible vegetable oils and starch. Mr. Bilmora explains that "Our product completes the cradle to cradle approach that is from birth to rebirth, it is part of nature."

According to him, these compostable biopolymers can be used to make a variety of items like Wet Waste Compost Bags, Plant Seed Bags, Crop Wraps, Food Wrappers, Fruit Trays, Plant Sapling pots, Commercial Bin Liners, Cutlery, Nursery Plant Pots and so on. The USP of these products is that they are biodegradable, recyclable and compostable.

On enquiring as to why these products haven't gained a lot of popularity, Mr. Bilmora says, "These products have a shelf life of 12-15 months after which they become one with the soil. The only problem with such bio-degradable products is that they are one and a half times expensive as compared to polythene bags."

Moreover polythene bags are readily available and hence picked by consumers who have no choice but to go for it! He further states that the consumers are often kept in the dark about the availability of these options as the vested interests in the plastic market tend to lobby against them. "If bio-diesel could get a boost by the Government's support, why not compostable products?" he questions. At present there are three major companies that deal in the production of biopolymers - Kargill (USA), Novamont (Italy) and DAAS (Germany) apart from a couple of companies in France. Only these companies deal in biopolymer production that has to be imported by India.

He calls for speedy action and a supportive stance from the Government in terms of removing excise duty and modifying the sales tax. It is only through the Government's policies that the process of a regular polythene bag and a compostable bio-degradable bag will be comparable, thereby encouraging the healthy practice of biodegradable products which are fit for the environment as opposed to polythene bags that are a nightmare for the soil and water bodies.

THE PROBLEM WITH POLYTHENE USAGE

Fossil fuels follow a cradle to grave approach and are non-renewable. At the rate at which we are consuming them, it is quite clear that the dependence on fossil fuels has to be curbed. Comparing a jute bag to compostable bag, he explains that a jute bag that will go on for 3-6 months will cost Rs. 26 and a similar compostable bag will cost Rs. 15 but will last two months. A consumer needs to be smart enough to go the eco-friendly way and not fall into the vicious cycle of cheap non-environment friendly products.

As part of Ministry of Environment and Forest, Mr. Bilmora has been working on the process of re-drafting the ban on polythene. He says that by mid-September, India will see a ban on the use of polythene bags. However the catch is that it would be subjective per state and not enforceable by the Centre.

He sees a solution in joint efforts by the Government and the industry - through public-private partnerships to work towards environment friendly initiative.

Though this may seem like a far cry from the present, he sounds hopeful when he shares his present workable solution wherein talks are on with the Retailers Association in India. If successful Mr. Bilmora is hopeful that the biodegradable products will be easily available to the public.

HIS SECOND VENTURE

The Society of Biochar Initiatives or TSB is a regional body of IBI, Washington. Explaining Biochar, he says, "Biochar has been practised in India for years, but in a very crude, unsustainable form. New and modern technology allow biochar to be produced as a product of the pyrolysis process (combustion with no oxygen). The production of biochar has both syngas and bio fuel as by products, which could be used by the farming communities to cater to their fertiliser and need, of both, as a cooking medium and fuel. Biochar is also a good tool for carbon sequestration."

Biochar has multiple uses from a soil amendment to a cleaning medium, fuel briquette, animal disinfection medium and so on. Sustainable biochar is a powerfully simple tool to fight global warming. This 2000-year-old practice converts agricultural waste into a soil enhancer that can hold carbon, boost food security, and discourage deforestation. It is one of the few technologies that is relatively inexpensive, widely applicable and quickly scalable. The mission of TSB is to promote and encourage the development of Biochar Systems that follow the Cradle to Grave sustainability guidelines.

When asked about his other pursuits, he replies, "My work is to purely educate us humans to prepare for a hot, unstable and eventually destructive and unsustainable earth." He claims that government support in this direction has been very little or none at all. His meeting with independent research scientist, Dr James Lovelock, has inspired him to become a strong provocateur of the Gaia hypothesis according to which Gaia is defined as "a complex entity involving the Earth's biosphere, atmosphere, oceans, and soil, the totality constituting a feedback or cybernetic system.

This system seeks an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet." The initial hypothesis was that the humans modify the conditions on the planet to make conditions on the planet more hospitable. His take away from that meeting is "We human beings are 'stupid' and think we can fix almost everything and anything."

Mr. Bilmora feels that the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, of the United Nations), findings and figures are inappropriate. "We are living in a heat age due to which the temperatures are soaring; glacial ice is melting resulting in increased sea levels. Only authentic agencies like NASA reports, Oceanographic institutes and reference papers of research provide real facts," he affirms. He also suggested a book "The Revenge of Gaia - The Final Warning" by Dr James Lovelock for an in-depth into the environment crisis.

On asking about his struggles to popularise biodegradable plastic and Biochar initiatives, he fumes. "The obstacles are absurd and overwhelming and unless you are passionate these obstacles are sure to run you over! The first obstacle is that the government is not proactive on either of the two initiatives, or if they are, it is half hearted and half baked! Corruption is prevalent at all levels of governance and the passion for people to look at initiatives, ONLY as a source of monetary gain."

When it comes to social entrepreneurs like him, he suggested, "Patience, enormous resilience and holding power, courage of conviction are quintessential. Apart from that, a realization that we are on 'the path not taken' is needed. Hence there will be no room for short cuts, easy gains, but a huge amount of sacrifice from unknown quarters." His message to the readers is "Simple lives are always in harmony with nature, so live simple and thus, eco-friendly." □

Richa Tiwari

The author pursuing her Master of Mass Communication majoring advertising, reading, writing, editing and report and aspire to make files on social and developmental issues.

SEGWAY

Leader in small electric vehicle

www.segway.com/bethnammeshwar



Photo by D. A. Johnson

Think Bengaluru 25 years back and you remember well planned roads, wide open spaces, no traffic and clean air. Fast-forward to today and bang you spend a quarter of your day just in traffic. As one balefully stares at the statistics of vehicle growth, one can help but wonder if there is a panacea to this problem.

ENTER · THE SEGWAY

The Segway is a battery-operated, two-wheeled, self-balancing vehicle invented by American entrepreneur Dean Kamen. When Dean Kamen unveiled the Segway on ABC's Good Morning America, he described the machine as "the world's first self-balancing human transporter."

From its launch in 2001, Segway has come a long way and has become the leader in personal, green transportation and developing products that transform the way you work, play and live. The Segway represents the next generation of clean and personal mobility.

It works towards zero-emission personal transportation and its compact nature offers to address the problem of urban congestion.

The Segway has many benefits for you and to the environment - less gas to buy, easier to park, and less wear on your car and most importantly NO NOISE!! It can also help reduce the impact of global warming by reducing our greenhouse gas output and consumption of imported fossil fuels. After one year on your Segway you would have literally saved a ton of CO₂ from being released into the atmosphere!!!

Another interesting fact about the Segway is that it can take you places that a car or bicycle can't - including inside many stores, office buildings, businesses, airports, elevators, and trains. Although they're ideal for short journeys, Segways can travel as far as 32 miles/50 km on a single battery charge, depending on terrain, payload, and riding style. Add to this fact it is very easy to use.

To move forward or backward on the Segway the rider has to just lean slightly forward or backward. To turn left or right, the rider simply moves the LeanSteer frame left or right. You get the sense of power and speed, yet you also feel a sense of safety and shockless control. It all feels natural, safe, and instinctive.



Photo: www.OffbeatIndia.com



Three popular flavors of the Segway are the Segway i2, the Segway iX, and the Segway i2 Golf.

The Segway i2 is a great way to enjoy the ride while commuting to work, running errands, or just traveling a short distance where a car is more hassle than it's worth. The Segway i2 has been developed to excel in speed, range, and maneuverability in varied environments. The Segway i2 brings added versatility to your world, offering sturdy capability in rugged off sidewalk terrain such as trails, bike paths or beachfronts. The Segway i2 Golf package is an innovative, fun and flexible way to play around.

Police and security agencies worldwide are using Segway products to patrol airports, transit stations, manufacturing facilities, shopping malls and campuses.

Most interesting news is that Segway is set to hit our desi market soon. Segway Inc., maker of the personal transportation devices, plans to start selling the product in India in a tie-up with the Birla Group. The Birla Group has business interests in steel and information technology. We expect the Indian market to be a significant one in the years to come. Initially, Segway plans to enter the Indian market with two base models—the i2 and i2. The i2 is meant for indoor use while the more rugged i2 can be used outdoors. The first Segway shipments in India will be in Gurgaon, with Mumbai and Bangalore.

In the US the devices retail for between \$800-\$1,000, but the company hasn't decided on how to price the products in India.

The gleeful smiles of Segway riders may have created an impression that this is...well...a toy!!! But make no mistake: Segway is indeed an incredibly fun to ride, it is serious transportation designed for today's world. ■

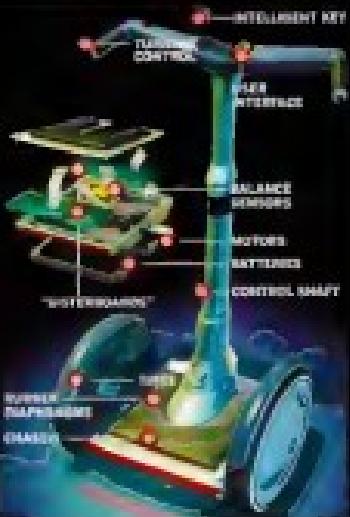
Segway Motorcycles

Segway is an HR professional working in Bangalore. In her spare time, she enjoys writing. She tries to do her bit for the environment by incorporating simple green practices in everyday life.



SEGWAY UNDER THE HOOD

The dynamics of the Segway PT are identical to a classic control problem, the inverted pendulum. The Segway PT (PT) is an inversion for personal transporter while the old auto PT was an inversion for human transportation. Its electric motor powered by Vilinox Technology phosphate-based lithium-ion batteries which can be charged from household current. It balances with the help of dual computer running proprietary software, two tilt sensors, and five gyroscopes (the gyroscopes do not affect the balance; they are merely used as sensors). The servo driven motors rotate the wheels forwards or backwards as needed for balance or propulsion. The rider accelerates or decelerates by leaning forward or backwards in the direction he or she wishes to travel.





An Introduction to Bird Watching

Wanna go birding? The author tells you how to get started and shares some exclusive pictures from his notebook.

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEEPAK RAJANNA

As a kid, I spent the summers in my mother's hometown, Chikmagalur, in the heart of the western ghats. Waking up to a symphony of bird calls in the middle of a coffee estate, it was hard not to be a birdwatcher. Each day, my uncle would introduce the kids in the family to a new treasure: the woodpecker whose nest had the perfectly sound entrance, the long-tailed tit that hovered so beautifully before the plunge, the kite that soared a mile high into the sky without a flap of its wings, and the flowerpecker that was smaller than its quarry.

After a few summers we were all as incautious as our beloved guide. Someone said that if you don't see the beauty in the Ninth Symphony nobody can show it to you. Fortunately birding is not like that. Although I classify myself as an amateur, I think I have enough stories to unravel for you the pleasures of bird-watching. Through this series of articles, I hope to introduce you to an activity that has given me a lot of joy. Luckily, we live in a region that's blessed in the matter of birds. In a recent bird race, enthusiasts spotted a total of 300 species in the city of Bangalore alone!

They say you can never look at a tree with the same eyes once you've seen the birds that nest in it. Bird watching is a great tool for sensitising the younger generation to the need for taking care of our environment. Any birdwatcher, who has been humbled by the rich details of the canopy, is likely to have a deeper instinct for conservation. I've noticed that bird-watching can elicit among the young an intrinsic love for the environment that can never be matched by the fear-mongering that modern-day environmentalism sometimes (justifiably) has to resort to. The easementment sure could use a new generation of custodians and what better way to raise that army than through the persuasion of those winged beauties. □

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED FOR BIRD WATCHING.

- 1) Invest in a good field guide. Salim Ali's "The Book of Indian Birds" is a great companion for beginners. There are two other guides that are widely popular among the more seasoned birders - "Field Guide to the Birds of India" by Rasmussen and一生, and my personal favorite, "Birds of the Indian Subcontinent" by Grimmett and Inskip.
- 2) Never go birding without a notebook and a pencil! When studying the birds that you spot, note as many features as you possibly can. This could include (but won't be limited to) size, color, shape of beak and tail and so on. Develop your own methods to capture the coloration patterns, calls of the birds and other behaviors that are crucial while identifying the exact species.
- 3) Birds fly and you don't. Your bird-watching experience will be vastly improved if you carry a pair of binoculars. Magnification using binoculars or scopes gives you a closer view into the bird's world and helps you study their behavior even when they are very far.
- 4) Although parrots frown upon cameras, as they make you focus on getting the perfect shot instead of concentrating on studying the bird, I find that a camera is a great note-taking device. Sometimes the exact identity of a bird is confirmed by the color of its tail, a detail that's easy for a novice to miss while taking notes but conveniently captured by your camera. Photographs also make it easy for you to consult with experts and to get their help in the identification of species. And let's admit, birds make great subjects, and hence photographing them can be a fulfilling experience too.
- 5) Joining a community of birdwatchers is the best way to accelerate your learning of both birds and the art of bird watching. In Bangalore, there is a very active community of birders that connect through an open mailing list, bangbirds@yahooroups.com. This community organises fortnightly birding trips in and around Bangalore. These events are great for networking with experts and finding activity partners.
- 6) There's no real substitute for being on the field practising your skills at spotting and identifying. While you are there, make sure to dress in dull clothes and stay as unobtrusive as possible. And remember, it's never just about the birds. Make sure to observe the surroundings too. The rewards of birdwatching are not limited to the appeal of the birds' visual form or diverse songs; there's fun to be derived in the process too. The waiting can be strangely meditative and relaxing, while the chasing gratifies the old hunter instinct that lives in all of us.

Deepraj Rajanna

Deepraj Rajanna works in Yaloof India. Deepak's hobby is bird watching and photography and he will be running a column on the subject.

Birds of the month

SEPTEMBER 2010



COLLARED SCOPS OWL (*OTUS LETTIA*)
This is a nocturnal bird that feeds on insects. This pair was photographed in an empty nest in the outskirts of Bangalore.



PALE-BILLED FLOWERPECKER
This bird also called the Tickell's flower pecker, at 8 cms, is one of the smallest birds in India.



COMMON HOOPOE (*UPAPA EPOPS*)
Often mistaken for a woodpecker, the Hoopoe is more closely related to Kingfishers. It also happens to be the national bird of Israel.



PURPLE SUNBIRD (*CINNYRIS ASIATICUS*)
Sunbirds are sexually dimorphic, i.e. the males are very different from the females. The specimen in the picture is a female.

MéLANGE

Interesting moments caught in pictures



The United States Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron (Blue Angels) during Fleet Week in Seattle. The Blue Angels is currently the oldest flying aerobatic team having entertained more than 45 million spectators worldwide since 1946.

Photographed by Antón Padilla
Antón is a software developer with a passion for photography. He is currently based in Seattle, USA. When not programming like a rocketeer, he is out capturing the great American Northwest in digital.



The people of Hong Kong gathered for the largest event in China to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the protests and massacre at Tiananmen Square on July 4th 1989.

Photographed By Arvind Vermaal

Arvind Vermaal is an Indian, currently living and working in Hong Kong. His interests lie in travel and street photography with a strong emphasis on storytelling. Website: www.arvindvermaal.com



A shaft of morning light filters in through the fluted windows of Humayun's tomb, New Delhi.

Photographed By Ishwinder Kaur

Ishwinder is a travel photographer, based in Delhi. Inspired by new sights and diverse cultures, she travels near and far to capture a range of people and places.



A girl takes a cigarette break in an alley in Wan Chai - one of Hong Kong's entertainment districts.

Photographed By Arvind Verma and Michael Sward

Michael Sward is a Hong Kong based American photographer with a passion for travel and wildlife photography.
Website: www.swardphotography.com

Arvind Verma is an Indian, currently living and working in Hong Kong. His interests lie in travel and street photography with a strong emphasis on storytelling. Website: www.arvindverma.com



A fishing enthusiast reaches out to his fishing line at Pacific Beach, San Diego.

Photographed By Ishwinder Kaur
Ishwinder is a travel photographer, based in Delhi. Inspired by new sights and diverse cultures, she travels near and far to capture a range of people and places.



"We never know the worth of water till the well is dry". Thomas Fuller

Turn off the tap while brushing. Take shorter showers. Use your washing machine and dish washers only when they are full. Clean your vehicles with a damp cloth instead of hosing them down with water. Fix leaking taps. Try and re-use water everywhere possible.

EVERY DROP COUNTS



Issued in public interest by **titli**

Of saddhi, Pooja, Banana leaves, Chat & the Environment

A mouth watering read on how our traditional Indian methods of celebration and dining have been formulated over centuries to ensure an ecological and sustainable process down to the very last morsel! WRITTEN BY ANURADHA BALAKRISHNAN | PHOTOGRAPHS BY AKSHAD VISWANATHAM



Traditional Madras breakfast

It's Onam or the Harvest Season for India's Southern peninsula. Celebration is in the air as one of the most complicated processes that man has known, the successful cultivation of the paddy crop. Ubiquitous with any celebration in the south is the concept of Sadhya or Saddhi, a traditional meal served on the Banana Leaf.

To a person new to Southern eating etiquette this might seem curious, in fact even absurd but think again until you realize this is probably one of the most brilliant and ecologically sound system of serving a banquet. The Plantain tree is abundant in the South.

It is planted in every house and is regarded as a symbol of life, prosperity and vitality. Its Stem, Flower and Fruit are the base ingredient for various delicacies it is therefore natural that the broad leaves that grow on this plant (called the Vazhaai Elai) should serve as the platter for a feast and its abundance helps the Southern system of feasting scale and thrive (so much so that the red blooded Tam-Brahm would toxin food eaten of the leaf is what gives the meal real flavor).

There is also an element of the ceremonial in eating of the banana leaf. Each person is served on a fresh leaf thus ensuring a clean plate.

The food is served in an ordered manner with a sweet coming in first, condiments and accompaniments on the top half of the leaf and finally the rice and delicately spiced curries served on the bottom half facing you, to help you eat easier. There are no plastic spoons or cups as you are using your hands while eating. When you are through you merely fold the leaf (Take care while doing this, a leaf folded towards you means you liked the food while leaf folded away from you might the anger the chef). These leaves are then collected and taken off as fodder for the cattle completing an ecologically sound and sustainable process.

As a kid I always marveled at old uncles and aunts and the tremendous skill they exhibited as they maneuvered their way through the platters of items served on the leaf. For me eating off a leaf was interesting as it meant having foam running of your leaf and onto your lap or spraying the room with shards of Papadum when you crushed it over your rice. Yet it was always amazed at how quickly and cleanly even a 1000 people could be fed in multiple batches of papadis. Fast-forward fifteen years to today and I see elements of Plastic and Styrofoam entering the Sadhya, ironically when it came to disposable as these new age convenient plastic elements that pose a challenge to the organisers. The humble Vaishai Ellai makes its entry and exit in much the same way as it has for hundreds of years, without much fuss providing nourishment in each step of the process.

The concept of having environmentally sustainable practices while celebrating east all over our vibrant country. Just a month from Onam, the spotlight moves to Bengal for Pooja a vibrant festival that celebrates the triumph of good over evil, of birth over death and of hope over despair. There is wharf of scented Deepal all around, the sounds of the Dhak vibrate in the air celebrating the coming of the Goddess Durga with her four children. Her form has been crafted lovingly by artisans with clay from the Ganges in the village of Kumartuli and she is adorned in Pitha or decorations made from the Shola tree. Come afternoon and its time for the Bhog - the community meal where everyone gathers to feast. The meal is served on Sali-pather-Thalis and Dongas or plates and bowls made from the leaves of the Sali tree. Again a brilliant system where that scales and ensures that focuses on sustainability.

Travel through Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and you find Kuthads, simple earthen-ware glasses that are used to serve Chai. Water is stored in Matkas or Earthen pots a natural mechanism that kept it cool in the summer even before the days of Kehrmance. Even the Muttah Bhel-walla inadvertently does his bit as he dishes out mounds of the tangy stuff in Peepal leaf dhobas or dishes. Traditionally it was eaten with a brilliantly crafted spoon a large flat Paapdi that itself formed a messy snack when the Bhel is over.

Catch the underlying thread in all that? Simple - when we ate, feasted or celebrated, we did in an ecologically sound way. But somewhere down the line we got disconnected. In bringing in elements of the modern (read plastic spoons, styrofoam cups and the world) we introduced new problems under the pretense of finding solutions. We forgot the basic that which is taken from nature must be given back to her in a way she appreciates it.

Back to Bengal. In Dashami and the Goddess is making her way home back to the abode of her mother. Her Form is immersed in Moophly from which it arose. The cycle has been completed and that which was taken from nature has been returned. And in this lies a strange fascinating promise that the goddess will return more resplendent than ever.



1



2

IMAGE 1 Ingredients to make pongal on a Beetel leaf

IMAGE 2 Bhel

IMAGE 3 Durga puja



SIMPLE YET SUSTAINABLE THINGS YOU CAN DO

■ When you have a party at home or go picnicking, go natural. Look for plates and bowls made from leaves. In most cities in the North you will find the Sali-leaved based Thali and Donga. In the south you will find equivalents made from the Peepul or Beetel leaf.

■ Lookout for bio-degradable paper cups. ITC has come out with a new line of these. They cost a little more but its worth the price and yes Styrofoam is a strict no.

■ Carry your own spoons and forks when you travel. Avoid plastic whenever possible.

■ Carry your own water. Bottled water is the worst thing you can do for the environment.

Anuradha Mukundan

Anuradha is a Consultant working in Bangalore. She is passionate about music, books and languages. Her idea is to do her bit for the environment by trying to incorporate simple green practices in everyday life.

"Change the Bulb Change the World!"

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